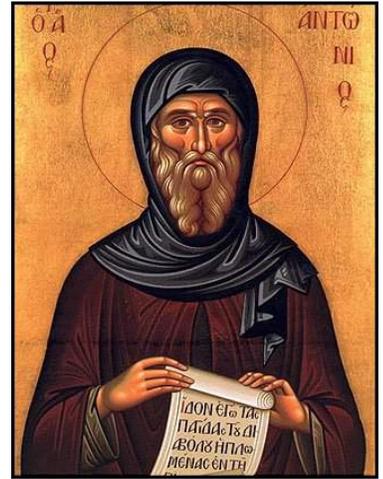


# St. Anthony's Scroll

A publication of  
St. Anthony Orthodox Christian  
Church

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## The 2016 Nativity Letter of His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X

To My Brethren of the Holy Antiochian Church, and To My Sons Wherever They are in This Apostolic See:

"When it was time for thy presence on earth the first enrollment of the world took place. Then it was that thou didst decide to enroll the names of men who believe in thy nativity"

Every winter, the Baby of the cave visits us to wipe away with His simplicity, our distress and difficulties, to touch with His humility our souls, and to illumine our world with His divine peace.

The Lord used the cave to walk into the caves of our souls, to clean them and to crystallize them with His divine love.

On Christmas we are always called to remember that the Lord of the cave has come to join us and to be with us, to build up his home in our souls, and plant His seeds in the heart and in the whole human person.

He has come to overwhelm our souls with the brilliance of His love and with the outflow of his compassion and tenderness.

He came that we may become His church branded with His name in our hearts and minds and in all our being, in our deeds and mercy towards everybody, so as to cling to Him through faith we inherited and received from our ancestors not from anyone else.

He came to lay His seal on our hearts so as to cling and adhere to Him and defend our homeland and get deeply rooted in it; to be rooted in our cities, villages, and mountains, in the first

land, the land of the church of Antioch that has spread the word "Christians" to the whole world.

On Christmas we are called as were our ancestors, to be written down for the sake of Christ.

This is what the psalmist says and what the church chants on Christmas. The day Christ was born, a census was made and this was by the order of Caesar. From this census the psalmist starts inviting the soul to be written down, branded, sealed and registered in the book of Life with Christ. We are called as he says elsewhere, in order to be written down, and in order to remember that this has been done that we are "written down on the name of Christ's Divinity".

We as Antiochian Christians don't count our belonging to Christ as an old fashioned pride, nor do we count it as well, as a superior belonging, or as a literal privilege

that has been mentioned throughout the pages of the Holy Gospel. It is in fact further than mere denominational or sectarian belonging that is sectarian and isolated at the same time. We are always called to remember that we have taken the Holy Gospel from the mouths of the Apostles, and that we did not hear it from anyone else.

We are called to know that the hardest circumstances would not take out from our hearts and our ancestors' a confession other than what we received and preserved. We are written down for the sake of Christ. And we received our baptism 2000 years ago, and so we do not need



St. Anthony the Great Orthodox Christian Church

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anyone to convert us to Christianity. For 2000 years, we have been ringing the bells of our love for the neighbor, and have been expressing our open hearts to him, whosoever he might be from all the social spectra and religions, but at the same time, we are called to know that we belong here to this land to the land, we were planted and in which we stick to our faith.

We are in great need of meditating over Christmas. The Divine Baby has come to share with us the hardships of his creatures. He came poor invading the whole world in the tidings of his love. He was displaced like most of our beloved brothers.

On the day of His advent, angels expected good tidings and peace; they chanted as well, and said: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and joy among people". Many people read these words and think that the peace of the whole creation is restricted to enjoying security, prosperity and easiness in life.

At the time of temptation, many people would ask and wonder, where is your peace Jesus in the events of our world? The answer will come right away from the Gospel itself. The peace of the whole creation, and the peace of the human spirit are called to blossom and grow in the human souls that accept the words of God; otherwise how shall we understand and be aware of the fact that the birth of Christ has planted peace in the souls and in the earth, whereas Rachel wept and mourned over thousands of children in Bethlehem who were murdered when Jesus was born and became as blossoms to the Christian *martyria* [witness] all over the world?

The peace of Christ is first of all a consolation that cures our hardships; it is not a magical substance that takes away the yoke of suffering and hardships from us.

Our prayer on this blessed day is for peace in Syria, for settlement in Lebanon and for prosperity in the East.

Our prayer on this blessed day is for Palestine, for Iraq, and for every other spot whose people have undergone pain and suffering. For more than five years the Christian Antiochian Church has been crucified by means of pain, and suffering that have come out of barbarism, terror, violence and a suffocating stifling economic siege.

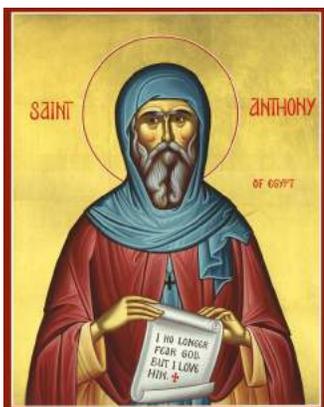
For more than three years the world has been watching the Golgotha of this East, by that I mean bishops to be abducted, priests to be killed, and many other people to be displaced. But this pain and agony shall be broken off by the dawn of the resurrection, and by the big stone of the empty tomb no matter how long the Golgotha may last.

Many people have spoken about human rights and about many other things. But it seems that the human counterfeit markets are applied to some people and covered to others with respect to interests and criteria.

The two bishops of Aleppo, His Eminence John Ibrahim and His Eminence Paul Yazigi, and others among the children of this wounded East, witness how interests are being used and how much man costs.

Unfortunately however, in the international slave market, the cause of the two bishops of Aleppo was and has been a sign of disgrace and shame on the forehead of those who have used "human rights" to destroy societies and countries.

On this Christmas, our hearts are moving to the manger of love, to the Divine Baby of Bethlehem, asking Him to look down upon the earth, from above, on the earth on which He was born. Our prayer is to ask Him to lay down his hand on your hearts brethren and children, at home and abroad (in the Diaspora). We ask Him to anoint your wounds with good gifts and with perfect talents. We ask Him to grant peace to this world and to bestow his truth and mercy over the whole world so as to start chanting with the angels: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth and joy among people."



## St. Anthony the Great

## PARISH FEAST DAY

DIVINE LITURGY

Monday, January 16<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 PM

Refreshments in Fellowship Hall to follow!

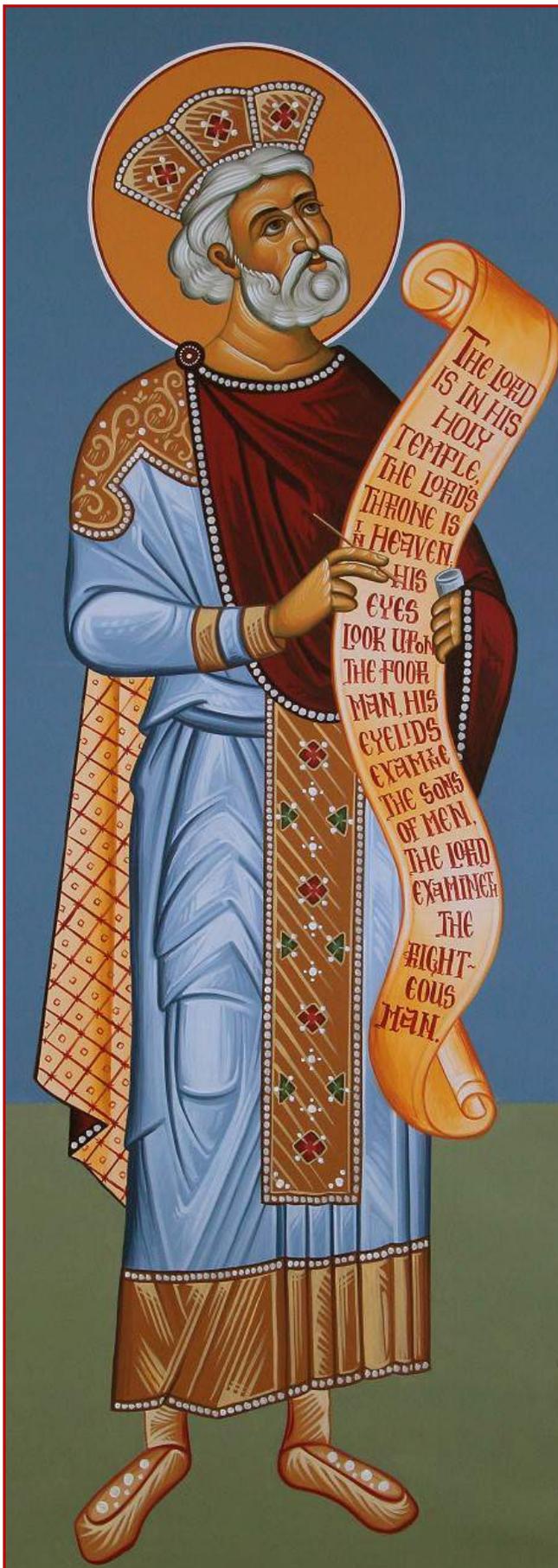
**WEDNESDAY EVENINGS**Beginning January 11<sup>th</sup>

6:30 ~ Vespers

7:00 ~ Potluck Meal

7:30-8:30 ~ Breakout Sessions:

- Catechumens w/Mark Enterline
- Bible Bowl Practice w/Adella  
(ages 10-18)
- Study of the Prophets w/Father A

January 11<sup>th</sup>: Moses & GideonJanuary 18<sup>th</sup>: David & SolomonJanuary 25<sup>th</sup>: Elijah & JonahFebruary 1<sup>st</sup>: Isaiah & JeremiahFebruary 15<sup>th</sup>: Habakkuk & DanielFebruary 22<sup>nd</sup>: Joel & Ezekiel

Do you have pictures in your home that have special meaning or significance? Your positive (and even negative) response is what the purpose of this study of the prophets is for! Learning about the significance of the prophets who are fashioned in our Church home. Each week, we will learn about the twelve prophets fashioned in our dome and after six weeks, you'll become a pro at explaining who these men are when your children or friends or visitors ask you, "What's the meaning of that icon?"

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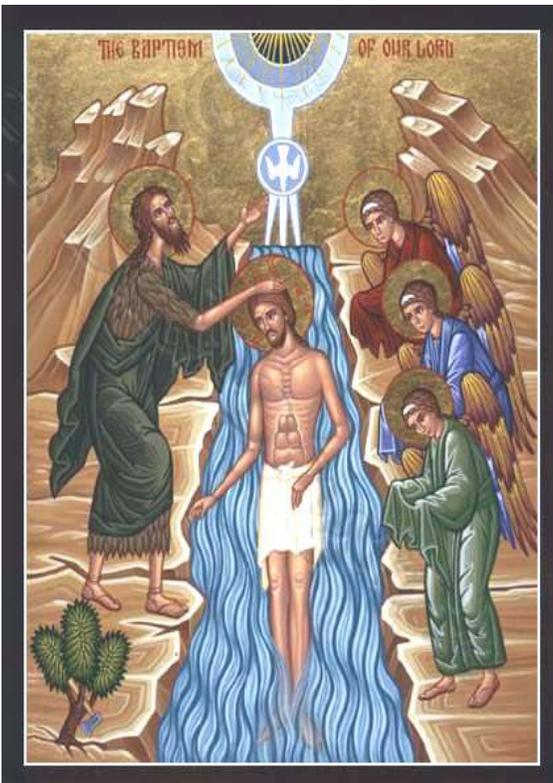
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## CHURCH STAFF

Pastor	Rev. Fr. Anthony Baba
Youth Director	Adella Winder
Secretary	Bonnie Kokkinis

## **THE FEAST OF THEOPHANY ~ Thursday, January 5<sup>th</sup>**

Matins @ 5:30 and Divine Liturgy @ 6:30 pm  
*Blessing of the Waters to follow Divine Liturgy*



## Theophany Home Blessings

If you would like to have your home blessed during this Theophany season, please contact [FrAnthonyBaba@gmail.com](mailto:FrAnthonyBaba@gmail.com) or call the Church Office at 281-251-6000.